

COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

VOL. XXII. No. 7.] LONDON, SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 1812. [Price 1s.

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TO THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORS OF BRISTOL.

Letter III.

Gentlemen,

Before I resume the subject, upon which I addressed you in my last, give me leave to explain to you what I mean by an *independent elector*. I do not mean a man who has money or land enough to make him independent; for, I well know, that money and land have no such effect; as we see, every day of our lives, very rich men, and men of what is called family too, amongst the meanest and most dirty dependants of the ministry or the court. Independence is in the mind; and I call independent that man, who is, at all times, ready to sacrifice a part, at least, of what he has, and to brave the anger and resentment of those from whom he derives his living, rather than act, in his public capacity, contrary to the dictates of his own mind. This is what I mean by an independent man. The journeyman who carries all his fortune in a silk handkerchief is as likely to be an independent man as is a Lord or a Squire; and, indeed, we find him much oftener worthy of the name.

It is to men of this description that I address myself upon the present occasion, and to their attention I now beg leave to recall some of the circumstances of the late election at Bristol, or, rather, the late contest; for, according to my notion of the law, there can be no election where soldiers are present during any portion of the time from the beginning to the end of the poll.

Of the two candidates, generally, I have spoken before; but, I now wish to draw your attention more particularly to the pledges tendered you, and given you, by Mr. Hunt. He promised and vowed three things: 1st. That he never would, as long as he lived, either directly or indirectly, pocket a single farthing of the *public money*. This, Gentlemen, is, with me, and so, I trust, it is with you, a capital point. Indeed, it always appears to me necessary to the safety of the electors, as far as the fidelity of their member goes. If the man

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We are often asked, whether we would wish gentlemen of great talents to serve the country as Secretaries of State, Chancellors of the Exchequer, &c. &c. without any pay? To which I, for myself, answer *no*. I would not only have them paid, but *well paid*; but I would not have them sit in parliament while they received the pay. If we are told, that this is *impracticable*, we point to the experience in its support; for, in the United States of America, there are no paid officers in the Legislature. No man can be a member of either House who is in the receipt of a sixpence of the public money under the Executive; and, what is more, he cannot receive any of the public money, in the shape of salary, during the time for which he has been elected, if the office from which the salary is derived has been created or its income increased since his election. This is the case in America. There are no chancellors of the exchequer, no secretaries of state, or of war, or of the admiralty, in either House of Congress; there is no *Treasury Bench*; there are no ministers and none of those other things of the same kind, and which I will not here name. Yet is America now exceedingly well governed; the people are *happy* and *free*; there are about *eight millions* of them, and there are *no paupers*; in that country poor men do not, to be sure, crawl almost upon their bellies before the rich; but, there are very few murders; I lived eight years in the largest city in the country, and there was no human being *hanged*, or otherwise put to death for a crime while I lived there.

ENGLISH LIBERTY OF THE PRESS,

As illustrated in the Prosecution and Punishment of

WILLIAM COBBETT.

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IN order that my countrymen and that the world may not be deceived, duped, and cheated upon this subject, I, WILLIAM COBBETT, of Botley, in Hampshire, put upon record the following facts; to wit: That, on the 24th June, 1809, the following article was published in a London news-paper, called the **COURIER**:—"The Mutiny amongst the **LO-CAL MILITIA**, which broke out at Ely, was *fortunately* suppressed on Wednesday by the arrival of four squadrons of the **GERMAN LEGION CAVALRY** from Bury, under the command of General Auckland. Five of the ringleaders were tried by a Court-Martial, and sentenced to receive 500 lashes each, part of which punishment they received on Wednesday, and a part was remitted. A stoppage for their knapsacks was the ground of the complaint that excited this mutinous spirit, which occasioned the men to surround their officers, and demand what they deemed their arrears. The first division of the German Legion halted yesterday at Newmarket on their return to Bury."—That, on the 1st July, 1809, I published, in the **Political Register**, an article censuring, in the strongest terms, these proceedings; that, for so doing, the Attorney General prosecuted, as seditious libellers, and by Ex-Officio Information, me, and also my printer, my publisher, and one of the principal retailers of the **Political Register**; that I was brought to trial on the 15th June, 1810, and was, by a Special Jury, that is to say, by 12 men out of 48 appointed by the Master of the Crown Office, found guilty; that, on the 20th of the same month, I was compelled to give bail for my appearance to receive judgment; and that, as I came up from Botley (to which place I had returned to my family and my farm on the evening of the 15th), a Tipstaff went down from London in order to seize me, personally; that, on the 9th of July, 1810, I, together with my printer, publisher, and the newsman, were brought into the Court of King's Bench to receive judgment; that the three former were sentenced to be imprisoned for some months in the King's Bench prison; that I was sentenced to be imprisoned for two years in Newgate, the great receptacle for malefactors, and the front of which is the scene of numerous hangings in the course of every year; that the part of the prison in which I was sentenced to be confined is sometimes inhabited by felons, that felons were actually in it at the time I entered it; that one man was taken out of it to be transported in about 48 hours after I was put into the same yard with him; and that it is the place of confinement for men guilty of unnatural crimes, of whom there are four in it at this time; that, besides this imprisonment, I was sentenced to pay a thousand pounds **TO THE KING**, and to give security for my good behaviour for seven years, myself in the sum of 3,000 pounds, and

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two sureties in the sum of 1,000 pounds each; that the whole of this sentence has been executed upon me, that I have been imprisoned the two years, have paid the thousand pounds **TO THE KING**, and have given the bail, Timothy Brown and Peter Walker, Esqrs. being my sureties; that the Attorney General was Sir Vicary Gibbs, the Judge who sat at the trial Lord Ellenborough, the four Judges who sat at passing sentence Ellenborough, Grose, Le Blanc, and Bailey; and that the jurors were, Thomas Rhodes of Hampstead Road, John Davis of Southampton Place, James Ellis of Tottenham Court Road, John Richards of Bayswater, Thomas Marsham of Baker Street, Robert Heathcote of High Street Marylebone, John Maud of York Place Marylebone, George Baxter of Church Terrace Pancras, Thomas Taylor of Red Lion Square, David Deane of St. John Street, William Palmer of Upper Street Islington, Henry Favre of Pall Mall; that the Prime Ministers during the time were Spencer Perceval, until he was shot by John Bellingham, and after that Robert B. Jenkinson, Earl of Liverpool; that the prosecution and sentence took place in the reign of King George the Third, and that, he having become insane during my imprisonment, the 1,000 pounds was paid to his son, the Prince Regent, in his behalf; that, during my imprisonment, I wrote and published 364 Essays and Letters upon political subjects; that, during the same time, I was visited by persons from 197 cities and towns, many of them as a sort of deputies from Societies or Clubs; that, at the expiration of my imprisonment, on the 9th of July, 1812, a great dinner was given in London for the purpose of receiving me, at which dinner upwards of 600 persons were present, and at which Sir Francis Burdett presided; that dinners and other parties were held on the same occasion in many other places in England; that, on my way home, I was received at Alton, the first town in Hampshire, with the ringing of the Church bells; that a respectable company met me and gave me a dinner at Winchester; that I was drawn from more than the distance of a mile into Botley by the people; that, upon my arrival in the village, I found all the people assembled to receive me; that I concluded the day by explaining to them the cause of my imprisonment, and by giving them clear notions respecting the flogging of the Local Militia-men at Ely, and respecting the employment of German Troops; and, finally, which is more than a compensation for my losses and all my sufferings, I am in perfect health and strength, and, though I must, for the sake of six children, feel the diminution that has been made in my property (thinking it right in me to decline the offer of a subscription), I have the consolation to see growing up three sons, upon whose hearts, I trust, all these facts will be engraven.

WM. COBBETT.

Botley, July 23, 1812.

Published by R. BAGSHAW, Brydges-Street, Covent-Garden.

LONDON: Printed by J. M'Creery, Black-Horse-Court, Fleet-street.

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The country, therefore, must be pretty well governed, and yet there is no member of either House of the Legislature who is in any office whatever under the government. The members are *paid for their time*, and paid their expenses to and from the place of sitting. They are appointed by the people and paid by the people; they are the people's representatives, and are not suffered to be the servants of, or to receive pay from, any body else.

Here, then, we have a proof, an experimental proof, of the practicability of conducting a government without giving place-men seats in the Legislature. And, though the *positive pledge* may, in all cases, not be insisted on, the principle ought to be clearly understood; and, where the candidate is not very well known indeed, and has not had *long trial*, I am for insisting upon the positive pledge. This pledge Mr. Hunt has given you; and you must be well assured, that, if he were disposed to break it, he would not dare to do it. For this alone I should prefer him to either of the other candidates, both of whom, all three of whom, you may be assured, have in view either *public money* or *title*, both of which Mr. Hunt disclaims.

The 2d pledge that Mr. Hunt has given you, is, that he will endeavour, if elected, to do away all the sinecure places, and all the pensions not granted for real services. This is a pledge which I deem of great importance. The sum of money expended *annually* in this way has been stated by Sir Francis Burdett at nearly a *million of pounds sterling*, that is to say, a sum sufficient to maintain 125,000 poor people all the year round, supposing them not to labour at all. I, for my part, should deem the abolition of these places and pensions of far greater importance to us than the gaining of a hundred battles, by land or sea.

The 3d pledge of Mr. Hunt is, that he will, if elected, do all that in him lies to procure for the nation a *peace* and a *reform of parliament*. Now, Gentlemen, look back for the last 20 years; reflect on what has passed during that time; and then say, whether you sincerely believe, that this nation can possibly continue in its present course much longer. The finger of wisdom, of common sense, points to peace as the only possible means of rescuing ourselves from our dangers; but, Gentlemen, *how are we to have peace?* The terms offered by the Emperor of France are fair; they are, indeed, such as I never expected to see obtained at the close of a negotiation;

they would, if accepted of, leave us in possession of all our conquests, of all the Islands in the West Indies; of the exclusive fishery of Newfoundland; of the Cape of Good Hope and the French Settlements in Senegal; of the French and Dutch Settlements in the East Indies; of the Isles of France and Bourbon; in short, they would leave us in possession of about 40 millions of conquered people, while France herself would not possess above 17 or 18 millions of conquered people. And, which is never to be forgotten, they would leave in our hands, the island of Malta itself, which, as you well know, was *the avowed object of the war*.

Why, then, have we not peace? *Because we have not reform*, it being absolutely impossible, in my opinion, for our present internal system to be continued during a peace which should be accompanied with the usual consequences of peace. When the present war began, it was stated by the then Minister, Addington, that *we were at war because we could not be at peace*; and, I suppose, that the same reason would now be given; for, otherwise, it is, I think, impossible to account for the rejection of the late overtures of the Emperor Napoleon, which, as I have, I am persuaded, clearly shown in a former Register, were both honourable and advantageous to England. Not only, therefore, will the country, in my opinion, never regain its former state of freedom and happiness without a reform of parliament; but, I am convinced, that, without such reform, it will never again have peace with France.

This being the case, it must be an inexcusable folly for you to elect any man who is not decidedly for a reform of the parliament; and, amongst all your candidates Mr. Hunt is the only man who has declared for that reform. The partisans of Sir Samuel Romilly say, that they do not that *he will* declare for reform. I differ from them in opinion. I do not think that he ever will; at least, not till such men as Mr. Hunt shall have made it *inconvenient* to be against reform. If Sir Samuel Romilly were for reform, why should he be so loath to make the declaration? He has told you, that those who promise most perform least; but, if this were to be taken as a rule without an exception, there would, at once, be an end of all promises and engagements between man and man. In this case, however, the rule did not apply; for he might have expressed his wish to see reform take place without making

any promise upon the subject. This he did not do: and, during the whole time that he has been a candidate for Bristol, he has not once mentioned, in any way, the subject of parliamentary reform.

There is, besides, with regard to Sir Samuel Romilly, a most suspicious circumstance; and that is, that his leading partisans all belong to that corrupt faction, which has been designated under the name of *Whigs*, and which faction is, if possible, more hostile to reform than the followers of Pitt and Perceval themselves. I have frequently asserted, that the two factions cordially unite upon all occasions, where an attack is made upon corruption in general, or where the interests of *party* are concerned. We saw them join hand-in-hand and heart to heart when the late Perceval and Castlereagh were accused by Mr. Madocks, on the 11th of May, 1809, on the anniversary of which day Perceval was shot, at the door of the very place where he had before triumphed. We saw them join in rallying round that same Perceval when Sir Francis Burdett was sent to the Tower under the escort of thousands of soldiers. We saw them join in reprobating the Address to the Prince Regent proposed by Sir Francis Burdett. In short, upon all occasions when something was to be effected hostile, decidedly hostile, to the people, the two factions have cordially joined; they have, for the time, become one. They hate one another; they would destroy one another; but, they love the public money more than they hate one another; and, therefore, when the *system* is in danger, they always unite. They cordially unite also against every man who is hostile to the system. They hate him even more than they hate each other; because he would destroy the very meat that they feed on.

Hence, Gentlemen, the united rancour of the factions against Mr. Hunt, and their united approbation of Mr. Bragge Bathurst. But, of this latter we must take more particular notice. There has appeared in the Bristol news-papers a publication respecting a Meeting for the purpose of uniting in a testimony of gratitude to Bragge Bathurst. At this meeting the following resolutions were passed; but, I beg you to observe, first, the language and sentiments of the resolutions, and next, who were the principal actors in the scene. The whole of the publication was as follows:—“At a General Meeting of the Merchants, Traders, and other Inhabitants of this City, convened by public advertisement,

“for the purpose of uniting in a testimony of gratitude to their late *Representative*, the Right Hon. Charles Bathurst,—THOMAS DANIEL, Esq. in the Chair,—the following Resolutions were moved by Michael Castle, Esq. and seconded by John Cave, Esq. and carried unanimously:—1st, That the conduct of the Right Hon. Charles Bathurst has been distinguished, during 18 years that he represented this City in Parliament, by a *meritorious attention to its local interest*, and an invariable zeal for the individual concerns of its inhabitants, entirely independent of every consideration of political party.—2d, That in the retirement of the Right Hon. Charles Bathurst from that elevated situation which he so deservedly held amongst us, we feel desirous of testifying, in this public manner, the gratitude we entertain for services that have reflected so much honour upon his abilities and exertions.—3d, That a Subscription be now entered into, for the purpose of presenting the Right Honourable Charles Bathurst with a permanent Token of our esteem and approbation of services that have been so frequently called upon, and attended to with so much alacrity on his part, and with so much advantage to the City at large.—4th, That a Committee be appointed of those Gentlemen who signed the requisition for the call of this meeting, together with any of those who may be subscribers, for the purpose of carrying into execution the wishes and intentions of this meeting.—5th, That the name of Mr. Robert Bruce be added to the Twenty Gentlemen who have signed the requisition, for the purpose of forming a Committee, with any other of the Subscribers.—6th, That Mr. Thomas Hellicar be requested to take upon himself the office of Treasurer. — THOMAS DANIEL, Chairman.”

Now, Gentlemen, you will observe, that here is as decided praise as men can bestow. Mr. Bragge is praised for his *eighteen years' conduct*, though, during that time, he has been doing every thing which the supporters of Sir Samuel Romilly affect to disapprove of. To describe his conduct under three heads, it has been this: he has uniformly supported Pitt and the war; he has uniformly distinguished himself as an opponent of Parliamentary Reform, and was one of the foremost in reprobating Mr. Madocks's motion; he has, during the 18 years of war and national misery, been a

great part of the time a placeman, and he is now a placeman in possession of a rich sinecure, with immense patronage attached to it. And, it is for *conduct like this* that these townsmen of yours are about to give a testimony of their *gratitude*!

If, however, this were confined to the friends of Bragge Bathurst, to those who profess his principles, all would be in its place, all would be natural enough. But, you will bear in mind, Gentlemen, that the two factions have united here, and that these resolutions, extolling to the skies a sinecure placeman, a Pittite, and a known and decided enemy of reform of parliament; you will bear in mind that these resolutions were *moved* by Mr. MICHAEL CASTLE, the very man who introduced Sir Samuel Romilly into your city; the very man in whose carriage Sir Samuel Romilly entered your city; the very man who filled the chair at Sir Samuel Romilly's dinner. This was the man selected to MOVE resolutions expressive of the gratitude of the people of Bristol for the conduct of Bragge Bathurst, the sinecure placeman, the supporter of Pitt and the war, and the decided and distinguished enemy of parliamentary reform. This was the man, this Mr. Michael Castle, to tell the world in the most solemn manner, that the friends of Sir Samuel Romilly approved of the conduct of the very man, whom they, when canvassing you for your votes, represented as unfit to be your member.

Gentlemen, can you want any further proof of the political hypocrisy of such men as Mr. Charles Elton, and Mr. Mills, and Mr. Castle? Can you be made to believe that they are sincere when they tell you that they wish for a reform of any sort? The truth is, they wish to put in a member of their own, that they may enjoy the benefit of his patronage; but, in doing this, they must take care not to do any thing hostile to the system, for without the existence of that all their prospects are blasted. You see, that they have, in these resolutions, no scruple to declare the vile and abominable principle upon which they act. They here most explicitly avow, that they are grateful to Bragge Bathurst for the zeal he has shown in the *individual concerns* of his constituents. That is to say, in getting them places under the Government; or, in other words, in enabling them to live upon the taxes; that is to say, upon the fruit of the people's labour. I told you, in my first letter, that they had no other object than this in view; that one part of them

only wanted to put in Sir Samuel Romilly that he might give them more of the taxes than they had been able to get from Bragge Bathurst. Mr. Hunt had told you this before; and now you see the fact openly avowed. The jobbers on both sides plainly tell whoever is to be their candidate, that he must take care of their *individual concerns*.

This, Gentlemen, is the real cause of the hatred, the rancour, the poisonous malice, of both factions towards Mr. Hunt, who makes open war upon the tax-eaters. This is the reason why they hate him. There are other reasons, but this is the great reason of all; and you may be well assured, that you will see both the factions always unite against any man, be he who he may, who is opposed to the system of places and pensions. But, what, then, must be the extent of the hypocrisy of the friends of Sir Samuel Romilly! They pretend that they wish for a reform of parliament, when they must well know, that such a reform would totally destroy the very root whence spring those *individual* benefits for which they express their gratitude to Bragge Bathurst. Sir Samuel Romilly, as I had before the honour to observe to you, has never told you that he is for a reform of the parliament; and, after the publication of these Resolutions, moved by the man who introduced him into your city, there are very few amongst you, I trust, who will not be convinced, that his partisans are well convinced that he will not support such a reform as shall give us a chance of destroying that corruption which is now eating out the very vitals of the country.

Clear as it is, then, that both the factions are your enemies, I hope that you will stand firmly by each other in opposition to so detestable an union. Both factions are hateful; but of the two the Whigs are the worst; because they disguise their hostility to the cause of freedom. Take, however, only a little time to reflect, and you will not be deceived by the cant of Mr. Charles Elton and Mr. Mills, both of whom, I would venture my life, have bespoke places for themselves in case of success to their candidate. They well know that the success of Mr. Hunt would defeat their scheme, and therefore they hate him. They do not dislike him for his separation from his wife; they would not give his wife a bit of bread to save her life, if she was a beggar instead of being, as she is, well and liberally provided for; they would see her drop from their door dead in the street, rather

than tender her a helping hand; but, to speak of the separation suits the turn of the hypocrites; by having recourse to it, they can cast calumny on their foe without letting their real motive appear. They would, if they dared, tell him that he is a cruel savage for endeavouring to prevent them from pocketing the public money; but this would not suit their purpose; and they therefore resort to his separation from his wife.

Trusting now, Gentlemen, that you see clearly the motives of the two factions, and that their main object is to get at a share of the public money, I shall not fear, that, at another election, you will *resolutely* endeavour to defeat that vile object. The whole mystery lies here. It is the public money that the factions want to get at. They are not attached to any particular set of men or of means. Whoever or whatever will give them the best chance of getting at the public money is the man or the thing for them; and Sir Samuel Romilly has been brought forward upon the recent occasion, only because there were a set of men, who found that they could not get so much of the public money as they wanted under any of the other candidates. They found the old ground too thickly settled for them; they therefore resolved to get new ground of their own; and they chose Sir Samuel Romilly, because he was at once likely to be a placeman, and was at the same time a man of a good deal of deserved popularity. They, if he were elected, would say as Falstaff did of the moon: "the *chaste* Diana, under whose influence *we steal*." They mean to make a passage of him through which to get at the people's earnings; and, all this, too, under the guise of *virtue* and *patriotism*. With me there wanted nothing to produce conviction of this fact before; and now, I trust, that there is no man who will affect to doubt it; now when we see them moving and signing resolutions, applauding the conduct of a member of parliament who has become a sinecure placeman, and who is notoriously a most decided enemy of reform of parliament.

With these facts before him, it is not to be believed, that any one man amongst you will give his vote for this hypocritical faction. If Sir Samuel Romilly will declare openly for reform of parliament, you will do well to vote for him and for Mr. Hunt; but, if he will not, it is your duty not only not to vote for him, but to do all that lies in your power to prevent his being elected; for, be you well assured, that, without a reform of parliament, no man living can save

this country, or render it any essential service. There is no national evil that we feel, be it small or great, which may not be traced to the want of a parliamentary reform, and such a reform, too, as shall cut up corruption by the roots.

It is with great pleasure that I perceive, that Mr. Hunt has promised you to be a candidate at Bristol at every future election, as long as he has life and health, unless he should be a member when a vacancy takes place for your city. This promise cures you an *election*; it secures you against being sold like *dumb creatures*; it secures you the *exercise* of your right of voting, and the right of now and then openly reproaching and loading with just maledictions any of the wretches who may betray you. To be a member for Bristol, in future, a man must stand an *election* of some days, at any rate; no one will be able to get in by a mere day's parade; an election at Bristol will not in future be a ceremony like that of choosing a churchwarden; your voices will be heard, and, I hope, they will always carry terror to the hearts of the corrupt. You have only to *persevere*. To keep steadily on. To suffer nothing to turn you aside. Your enemies cannot kill you, nor can they do you harm. If they collect and publish lists of *your names*; you will do well to collect and publish lists of *theirs*, and then stand your chance for the *final effect*. But, above all things, be upon your guard against the fraudulent dealings of the Whigs, who are the worst faction of the two because they are the greatest hypocrites. They make use of the name of Sir Samuel Romilly as the means of deceiving you, and of getting a share of the public money into their own pockets; and of this fact I beg you never to lose sight.

I am, Gentlemen, your friend,

WM. COBBETT.

Botley, Tuesday,
11th August, 1812.

SUMMARY OF POLITICS.

NORTHERN WAR.—The progress of this war, as far as we have any account of it, seems to prove the correctness of the opinion of Sir Francis Burdett, given in his admired speech upon the State of the Nation. Napoleon does seem still to be a match for Lord Castlereagh and Lord Palmerston. He seems not to have been totally ignorant of the means of carrying on

war in the country which he was going to attack.—As to the grounds of this war, my readers, who have now all the correspondence before them, must have seen, that it was no other than the refusal of the Czar to exclude the manufactures and trade of England from his dominions. Whether the demand made by Napoleon was reasonable or not must depend upon circumstance: and whether it was wise to refuse it, will very soon, I dare say, be proved. At present I can see, for my part, no sign of any impediment to the French armies, who are, it appears, marching over countries, where the people are *glad to receive them*.—This may seem strange to some persons; but, the cause once known, it will no longer seem strange.—The question with every people, in such a case, is, “shall we be *better* or *worse* off by becoming subjects of Napoleon?” And, if the answer is, that they shall be *worse* off, they assist in opposing him; if the contrary, they do not assist in opposing him.—It is as much in vain for us to abuse the people of Poland or of Russia, as it was for us to abuse the Dutch or the Italians. They do not hear our abuse; and, if they were to hear it, they would only hate us a little more for it. Every nation must feel for itself. It is very amusing to hear people in England execrating the Poles because they do not fight, because they do not shed their blood, for the Russians who conquered their country, who have held it by force, and who have always considered the people as a conquered people. It is amusing to hear us abuse the Poles for this, while, in the same breath, we abuse the Emperor Napoleon as an *Usurper*, and while we call upon all his people to shake off his yoke.—To predict any thing as to the result of this war would be absurd; but, it may not be amiss to endeavour to prepare the public mind for the consequences of the success of Napoleon. That success would, it seems to me, be decisive of the fate of the continent of Europe. The whole force of France, a great part of which has been always held in readiness for a Northern War, would then be directed against Spain and Portugal, which latter even would, in that case, probably not be long in our possession.—It has all along been my opinion, that Napoleon meant to end the continental war in the Southern Peninsula, whither we were and still are sending such immense sums of money, and where employment is found for so large a part of our military

force. This opinion is now confirmed; because, if he had been so minded; if he had wished to send a larger force to Spain and Portugal, he could have sent at least a hundred and fifty thousand of those men, whom he is now marching against the Czar. His war against the Czar did not press. It could have waited. Its object was merely to enforce commercial regulations. The North offered no danger, no insult, to the Empire of France. The object to be accomplished by the war could have been accomplished after the war had been ended in the South. It is, therefore, clear, that, though he had the means of sending 150,000 additional troops into the Peninsula, he chose rather to let the war drawl on there as the means of drawing off the blood and treasure of England.—If he now succeed in the North (which is, at least, *possible*), what terms of peace does the reader suppose will be offered to us next time? Does any man imagine, that we shall ever again hear of such terms as those which we have rejected? I, for my part, imagine no such thing; and, I shall, I am pretty confident, hear those lamenting that rejection who are now applauding it to the skies.—The terms were not only good, but the *time* was singularly favourable. Russia ready for war, and a great dearth of bread in France; two circumstances that we can never hope to see unite again. But, such appears to be the aversion to peace, that even these circumstances, so singularly favourable, were wholly overlooked or set at nought.—The people of England have been told very often, that those of France sighed for peace; that the war was unpopular in France; that the people there hated Napoleon because he would not give them peace with England. I have never seen any proof of the truth of this; but, supposing it to be the real state of the fact, would it not have been wise in us to show a *disposition* for peace when the offer was made to us? If any thing were wanted to reconcile the people of France to the continuation of the war, what is so likely to do it as a rejection, on our part, of reasonable terms of peace?—When the circumstances of the war are in our favour, we refuse to treat upon the ground of its being unwise to stop our army in its career of victory; and when the circumstances of the war are unfavourable to, we refuse to treat upon the ground that it would be unwise to appear to be frightened into a treaty. In the former case we treat a proposition for peace as proceeding from

the fears of Napoleon; in the latter, as proceeding from his arrogance. So that, really, I do not, for my part, see what case can arise, in which we shall see it wise for us to treat for peace with France.

—Nay, I almost fear, that the notion of *re-establishing the Bourbons* has been revived. I have lately seen, what I have never seen before, the whole of the personages belonging to the French Royal Family forming part of a party with the Queen and Prince Regent, which is very little short of being openly received at court and acknowledged in their royal capacities. Whether this was looked upon as a good occasion to revive the claims of that family, or whether the meeting was accidental, I know not, but I think it is the duty of the minister to advise the Prince Regent not to suffer any thing to be done, which may tend to countenance the idea, that that family is again to be put forward by us; for, in that case, a war of extermination will be, in fact, proclaimed.

WESTMINSTER MEETING.—On Wednesday, the 5th instant, there was a Meeting of the Inhabitant House-Holders of the City and Liberties of Westminster, at which the following Resolutions were moved by MAJOR CARTWRIGHT and seconded by MR. HARRIS: “Resolved, 1st. “That the Chancellor of the Exchequer “having taught us to expect, in addition to all the grievous taxes on Income, an early tax on Capital, it is expedient to distinguish between these “modes of taxation.—2d. That to tax “Income, is to take a proportion of the “rents or profits of an estate; to tax Capital, is to take away part of the estate “itself.—3d. That a tax on Capital, “annually repeated, must shortly take “away the whole of the estate.—4th. “That between the effect of taxing Capital, and the effect of confiscation, this “Meeting is not able to distinguish.— “5th. That although the whole of Men’s “Estates may be taken away by arbitrary “Taxation, yet, as neither land, nor its “produce, nor other personal property, is “thereby annihilated, so the real effect of “the system is, to transfer all property, “real and personal, from the right owners “to those who, possessing a power of arbitrary Taxation, can take away that “property at their pleasure.—6th. That “the Oligarchy, which, by usurping a “great majority of the seats in the House “of Commons, are become masters of all

“property, and can take it away at their “pleasure, are, by the same means, become masters of the Crown and its Exchequer.—7th. That this Meeting “knows but of one crime meriting punishment by a confiscation of their estate, of “which the People of England have been “guilty, namely, the crime of having too “long submitted to Taxation without Representation—a crime of which they “must speedily repent, or inevitably sink “into a slavery the most abject and the “most hopeless.—8th. That as the “House of Commons exercises the authority of a Court of Judicature, with exclusive jurisdiction over whatever relates “to the Elective and Legislative Rights of “the People, so as no redress of any injury touching the same can be elsewhere “obtained, the Meeting, on behalf of “themselves and the nation at large, will “present to that House a Petition of Right, “claiming Representation co-extensive with “Taxation in Annual Parliaments, according to the Constitution; and demanding that “Justice be neither denied “nor delayed,” according to Magna Charta.”—These resolutions, which I insert as I find them in the Morning Chronicle and Courier News-papers, contain matter worthy of universal attention. The talk of a *tax upon capital* has given rise to a little alarm even amongst those who have been very well contented under the income tax. But, what is the use of talking of these matters in detail? It is the power of *taxation without representation*; that is the only thing worthy of our attention. It is a maxim, that we *tax ourselves*; and, if this maxim be not acted upon, what signifies any thing else as relating to politics?—A Mr. Martin, of Galway, who, I suppose, has a house in Westminster, and whose speeches in parliament I have sometimes read, spoke at this meeting, and, if a true account be given of his speech, he made a very miserable attempt to oppose the propositions of the venerable Major. He wanted to be *shown* that a reform would *make things better*. Just as if any thing, any argument or any fact were necessary to convince a man, that the doing away of corruption could fail to do good, could fail to make things better. He made use of all the cant of the day against reform; could not see that it would make men better; could not see that it would make men more zealous in the defence of their country; and the like; upon all which points he was answered by Sir Francis Burdett.

There was one point, however, which I shall notice rather more particularly: Mr. Martin said: "Let us fight the *public enemy*, and then, *when we have done our duty to our country*, it will be time to think of our *private wrongs*." If Mr. Martin, by "*public enemy*," meant to say *foreign enemy*, and by "*private wrongs*," *domestic wrongs*, I differ wholly from him in opinion. I think the danger and the disgrace from these wrongs may be much greater than from any efforts of a foreign enemy; and, I am for beginning the work of redress at home, before I pester myself with what is going on abroad. Before men begin to "*fight*," they ought to know pretty well what they are fighting for. In short, I am as ready as Mr. Martin to fight the foreign enemy; but I am for a redress of grievances at home at the same time; because, if my right to redress is to wait till the war is over, I may never live to see it.—This is an old and stale device, to turn the attention of the people of a country from their domestic grievances to their foreign dangers; but, this trick can never succeed at a time when the people in general are thoroughly convinced, that their *domestic grievances* are the cause of their *foreign dangers*.

WM. COBBETT.

Botley, 12th August, 1812.

THE LUDDITES,

OR HISTORY OF THE SEALED BAG.

Report of the House of Lords, from the Secret Committee appointed to inquire into the late Disturbances.

Your Committee, in pursuing the Inquiry referred to their consideration, have endeavoured to ascertain the origin of the disturbances which have arisen in the different parts of the country, with respect to which they have obtained information, the manner in which those disturbances have been carried on, the objects to which they have been apparently directed, the means used to suppress them, the effects of those means, and the state of those parts of the country within which the disturbances have prevailed.—The disposition to combined and disciplined riot and disturbance which has attracted the attention of Parliament, and excited apprehension of the most dangerous consequences, seems to have been first manifested in the neighbourhood of the

town of Nottingham in November last, by the destruction of a great number of newly-invented stocking-frames, by small parties of men, principally stocking-weavers, who assembled in various places round Nottingham.—By degrees the rioters became more numerous and more formidable; many were armed and divided in different parties, disturbed the whole country between Nottingham and Mansfield, destroying frames almost without resistance. This spirit of discontent (amongst other causes to which it has been attributed) was supposed to have been excited or called into action by the use of a new machine, which enabled the manufacturers to employ women in work in which men had been before employed, and by the refusal of the manufacturers to pay the wages at the rate which the weavers demanded; and their discontent was probably heightened by the increased price of provisions, particularly of corn. The men engaged in these disturbances were at first principally those thrown out of employ by the use of the new machinery, or by their refusal to work at the rates offered by the manufacturers, and they particularly sought the destruction of frames owned or worked by those who were willing to work at the lower rates; in consequence of the resistances opposed to the outrages of the rioters, in the course of which one of them was killed, they became still more exasperated and more violent, till the magistrates thought it necessary to require the assistance of a considerable armed force, which was promptly assembled, consisting at first principally of Local Militia and Volunteer Yeomanry, to whom were added above 400 special constables; the rioters were then dispersed, and it was hoped that the disturbances had been by these means suppressed.—Before the end of the month of November, however, the outrages were renewed; they became more serious, were more systematically conducted, and at length the rioters began in several villages, where they destroyed the frames, to levy at the same time contributions for their subsistence, which rapidly increased their numbers, and early in December the outrages were in some degree extended into Derbyshire and Leicestershire, where many frames were broken.—In the mean time a considerable force both of infantry and cavalry had been sent to Nottingham, and the commanding officer of the district was ordered to repair thither; and in January two of the most experienced police magistrates were dis-

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patched to Nottingham, for the purpose of assisting the local authorities in their endeavours to restore tranquillity in the disturbed districts.—The systematic combination, however, with which the outrages were conducted, the terror which they inspired, and the disposition of many of the lower orders to favour rather than oppose them, made it very difficult to discover the offenders, to apprehend them if discovered, or to obtain evidence to convict those who were apprehended of the crimes with which they were charged. Some, however, were afterwards proceeded against at the Spring assizes at Nottingham, and seven persons were convicted of different offences, and sentenced to transportation.—In the mean time acts were passed for establishing a police in the disturbed districts, upon the ancient system of watch and ward, and for applying to the destruction of stocking frames the punishment before applied by law to the destruction of other machinery.—The discontent which had thus first appeared about Nottingham, and had in some degree extended into Derbyshire and Leicestershire, had before this period been communicated to other parts of the country. Subscriptions for the persons taken into custody in Nottinghamshire were solicited in the month of February at Stockport, in Cheshire, where anonymous letters were at the same time circulated, threatening to destroy the machinery used in the manufactures of that place, and in that and the following months attempts were made to set on fire two different manufactories. The spirit of disorder then rapidly spread through the neighbourhood; inflammatory placards, inviting the people to a general rising, were dispersed, illegal oaths were administered, riots were produced in various places, houses were plundered by persons in disguise, and a report was industriously circulated, that a general rising would take place on the first of May, or early in that month.—This spirit of riot and disturbance was extended to many other places, and particularly to Ashton-under-line, Eccles, and Middleton; at the latter place the manufactory of Mr. Burton was attacked on the 20th of April, and although the rioters were then repulsed, and five of their number were killed by the military force assembled to protect the works, a second attack was made on the 22d of April, and Mr. Burton's dwelling-house was burnt before military assistance could be brought to his support. When troops arrived to protect the works, they were fired upon

by the rioters, and before the rioters could be dispersed several of them were killed and wounded; according to the accounts received, at least three were killed and about twenty wounded.—On the 14th of April riots again prevailed at Stockport; the house of Mr. Goodwin was set on fire, and his steam-looms were destroyed. In the following night a meeting of rioters on a heath about two miles from the town, for the purpose, as supposed, of being trained for military exercise, was surprised and dispersed; contributions were also levied in the neighbourhood, at the houses of gentlemen and farmers.—About the same time riots also took place at Manchester and in the neighbourhood, of which the general pretence was the high price of provisions. On the 26th and 27th of April the people of Manchester were alarmed by the appearance of some thousands of strangers in their town, the greater part of them, however, disappeared on the 28th; part of the Local Militia had been then called out, and a large military force had arrived, which it was supposed had overawed those who were disposed to disturbance. An apprehension, however, prevailed, of a more general rising in May, and in the neighbourhood of the town many houses were plundered. Nocturnal meetings for the purpose of military exercise were frequent; arms were seized in various places by the disaffected; the house of a farmer near Manchester was plundered, and a labourer coming to his assistance was shot.—The manner in which the disaffected have carried on their proceedings is represented as demonstrating an extraordinary degree of concert, secrecy, and organization. Their signals were well contrived and well established, and any attempt to detect and lay hold of the offenders was generally defeated.—The same spirit of riot and disturbance appeared at Bolton-in-the-Moors. So early as the 6th of April, intelligence was given, that at a meeting of delegates from several places it had been resolved, that the manufactory at West Haughton, in that neighbourhood, should be destroyed, but that at a subsequent meeting it had been determined that the destruction of this manufactory should be postponed. On the 24th of April, however, the destruction of this manufactory was accomplished. Intelligence having been obtained of the intended attack, a military force was sent for its protection, and the assailants dispersed before the arrival of the military, who then returned to

their quarters; the rioters taking advantage of their absence, assailed and forced the manufactory, set it on fire, and again dispersed before the military could be brought again to the spot.—Symptoms of the same spirit appeared at Newcastle-under-Lyne, Wigan, Warrington, and other towns; and the contagion in the mean time had spread to Carlisle and into Yorkshire.

—In Huddersfield, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and in the neighbourhood, the destruction of dressing and shearing machines and shears began early in February: fire-arms were seized during the course of March, and a constable was shot at in his own house. In March a great number of machines belonging to Mr. Vicarman were destroyed, and in April the destruction of Bradley Mills, near Huddersfield, was threatened, and afterwards attempted, but the mills were protected by a guard, which defeated the attempt. About the same time the machinery of Mr. Rhode's mill at Tentwhistle, near to Stockport, was utterly destroyed; and Mr. Horsfall, a respectable merchant and mill-owner, in the neighbourhood of Huddersfield, was shot about six o'clock in the afternoon, in broad day-light, on the 28th of April, returning from market, and died on the 30th of the same month.—A reward of £2000. was offered for the discovery of the murderers, but no discovery has yet been made, though it appears that he was shot by four persons, each of whom lodged a ball in his body; that when he fell, the populace surrounded and reviled him, instead of offering assistance, and no attempt was made to secure the assassins, who were seen to retire to an adjoining wood. Some time after, a young woman was attacked in the streets of Leeds, and nearly murdered, her skull being fractured; and the supposed reason for this violence was an apprehension that she had been near the spot when Mr. Horsfall was murdered, and might, therefore, be able to give evidence which might lead to the detection of the murderers.—The town of Leeds had for some time before been much alarmed by information that attacks were intended to be made on places in the town and its neighbourhood, which induced the magistrates to desire a strong military force, and to appoint a great number of respectable inhabitants of the town special constables, by which means the peace of the town was in a great degree preserved.

—Early, however, in the morning of the 24th of March, the mills of Messrs. Thompsons, at Rawdon, a large village about eight

miles from Leeds, was attacked by a large body of armed men, who proceeded with great regularity and caution, first seizing the watchman at the Mill, and placing guards at every neighbouring cottage, threatening death to any who should attempt to give alarm, and then forcibly entering the mill, they completely destroyed the machinery. In the following night, notwithstanding the precautions adopted, the buildings belonging to Messrs. Dickinsons in Leeds, were forcibly entered, and the whole of the goods there, consisting principally of cloths, were cut to pieces. Many other persons in Leeds were threatened with similar treatment, and the proceedings at this place are represented to have had for their object the destruction of all descriptions of goods prepared otherwise than by manual labour.

—At Leversedge, near Hockmondwicke, which is in the neighbourhood of the moors dividing Lancashire and Yorkshire, an attack was made early in the morning of the 12th of April by a body of armed men, represented to have been between two and three hundred in number, on a valuable mill belonging to Mr. Cartwright. The mill was defended with great courage by Mr. Cartwright, the proprietor, with the assistance of three of his men and five soldiers, and the assailants were at length compelled to retire, being unable to force an entrance into the mill, and their ammunition probably failing. Two of the assailants were left on the spot desperately wounded, and were secured, but died of their wounds. Many others are supposed to have been also wounded, and information was afterwards obtained of the death of one of them. When the assailants retired, they declared a determination to take Mr. Cartwright's life by any means. One of the wounded men who was left on the spot was only nineteen years of age, and son of a man in a respectable situation in the neighbourhood; but neither this man nor the other prisoner would make any confession respecting their confederates in this outrage. The neighbouring inhabitants, who assembled about the mill, after the rioters had retired, only expressed their regret that the attempt had failed. A vast concourse of people attended the funeral of the young man before described, who died of his wounds; and there was found written on the walls in many places, "Vengeance for the Blood of the Innocent."—The threats against Mr. Cartwright's life were attempted to be put into execution on the 18th of April, when he was twice shot

at in the road from Huddersfield to Rawfold. About the same time a shot was fired at a special Constable on duty at Leeds, and a ball was fired at night into the house of Mr. Armitage, a Magistrate in the neighbourhood, and lodged in the ceiling of his bed-room; Col. Campbell also, who commanded the troops at Leeds, was shot at in the night of May 8, upon returning to his own house, by two men, who discharged their pieces at him within the distance of twenty yards, and immediately after a third shot was fired, directed towards the room usually occupied by Colonel Campbell and his family.—At Horbury, near Wakefield, valuable mills were attacked on the 9th of April by an armed body, supposed to consist of 300 men. The machinery and considerable property were destroyed. The men who committed the outrage were seen on the road between Wakefield and Horbury, marching in regular sections, preceded by a mounted party with drawn swords, and followed by the same number of mounted men as a rear guard. They were supposed to have assembled from Huddersfield, Duesbury, Hickmondwicke, Guildersome, Morley, Wakefield, and other places.—In many parts of this District of Country the well-disposed were so much under the influence of terror, that the Magistrates were unable to give protection by putting the Watch and Ward Act in execution, and the lower orders are represented as generally either abettors of or participators in the outrages committed, or so intimidated, that they dared not to interfere.—At Sheffield the storehouse of arms of the Local Militia was surprised in the month of May, a large proportion of the arms were broken by the mob, and many taken away; this disturbance, however, seems to have been followed by no further consequences, and the remainder of the arms were secured.—But during the months of May and June depredations of different kinds, and particularly the seizure of arms, continued to be nightly committed in other parts of Yorkshire; and it is represented that in the neighbourhood of Huddersfield and Birstall the arms of all the peaceable inhabitants had been swept away by bands of armed robbers. In consequence of these outrages the Vice-Lieutenant of the West Riding, the Deputy-Lieutenants, and Magistrates assembled at Wakefield on the 11th of June, and came to a resolution, "That the most alarming consequences were to be apprehended from the nightly

depredations which were committed by bodies of armed men." At the same time this remarkable circumstance was stated, that amongst one hundred depositions taken by the Magistrates of the facts of robberies committed, there was only one as to the perpetrator of the crime.—During the latter part of this period, it is represented that nightly robberies of arms, lead and ammunition, were prevalent in the districts bounded by the rivers Air and Calder, and that the patrols which went along both banks of the Calder, found the people in the ill-affected villages up at midnight, and heard the firing of small arms at short distances from them, through the whole night, to a very great extent, which they imagined proceeded from parties at drill. In the corner of Cheshire, touching upon Yorkshire and Lancashire, in the neighbourhood and to the eastward of Ashton, Stockport, and Moultram, nocturnal meetings were more frequent than ever, and the seizure of arms carried on with great perseverance. Peculiar difficulties are stated to exist in this quarter from the want of Magistrates.—Your Committee have not thought it necessary to detail, or even to state all the outrages which have been committed in different parts of the country, but have selected from the great mass of materials before them, such facts only as appeared to them sufficient to mark the extent and nature of those disturbances.—The causes alleged for these destructive proceedings have been generally the want of employment for the working manufacturers, a want, however, which has been the least felt in some of the places where the disorders have been most prevalent, the application of machinery to supply the place of labour, and the high price of provisions; but it is the opinion of persons, both in civil and military stations, well acquainted with the state of the country, an opinion grounded upon various informations from different quarters now before your Committee, but which, for obvious reasons they do not think proper to detail, that the views of some of the persons engaged in these proceedings have extended to revolutionary measures of the most dangerous description.—Their proceedings manifest a degree of caution and organization which appears to flow from the direction of some persons under whose influence they act; but it is the opinion of a person, whose situation gives him great opportunities of information, that their leaders, although they may possess considerable in-

fluence, are still of the lowest orders; men of desperate fortunes, who have taken advantage of the pressure of the moment, to work upon the inferior class, through the medium of the Associations in the manufacturing parts of the country. — The general persuasion of the persons engaged in these transactions appear, however, to be, that all the societies in the country are directed in their motions by a secret committee, and that this secret committee is therefore the great mover of the whole machine; and it is established by the various information to which the committee has before alluded, that societies are formed in different parts of the country; that these societies are governed by their respective secret committees; that delegates are continually dispatched from one place to another, for the purpose of concerting their plans; and that secret signs are arranged, by which the persons engaged in these conspiracies are known to each other. The form of the oath or engagement administered to those who are enlisted in these societies, also refers expressly to the existence of such secret committees. — The object of this oath is to prevent discovery, by deterring through the fear of assassination those who take it from impeaching others, and by binding them to assassinate those by whom any of the persons engaged may be impeached. These oaths appear to have been administered to a considerable extent; copies of them have been obtained from various quarters, and though slightly differing in terms, they are so nearly the same, as to prove the systematic nature of the concert by which they are administered. — The oath itself is of so atrocious a nature, that your committee have thought it right to insert the form, as it appears in one of those copies: — “I, *A. B.* of my own voluntary will, do declare and solemnly swear, that I never will reveal to any person or persons under the canopy of Heaven the names of the persons who compose this secret committee, their proceedings, meeting, places of abode, dress, features, connexions, or any thing else that might lead to a discovery of the same, either by word or deed, or sign, under the penalty of being sent out of the world by the first brother who shall meet me, and my name and character blotted out of existence, and never to be remembered but with contempt and abhorrence; and I further now do swear, that I will use my best endeavours to punish by death any traitor or traitors, should any rise up amongst us,

wherever I can find him or them, and though he should fly to the verge of nature, I will pursue him with increasing vengeance. So help me God, and bless me to keep this my oath inviolable.” — The military organization carried on by persons engaged in these societies has also proceeded to an alarming length; they assemble in large numbers, in general by night, upon heaths or commons, which are numerous and extensive in some of the districts where the disturbances have been most serious; so assembled they take the usual military precautions of paroles and countersigns; then muster rolls are called over by numbers not by names; they are directed by leaders sometimes in disguise; they place sentries to give alarm at the approach of any persons whom they may suspect of meaning to interrupt or give information of their proceedings, and they disperse instantly at the firing of a gun, or other signal agreed upon, and so disperse as to avoid detection. They have in some instances used signals by rockets or blue lights, by which they communicate intelligence to their parties. — They have procured a considerable quantity of arms, by the depredations which are daily and nightly continued; they have plundered many places of lead, for the purpose of making musket balls, and have made some seizures of gunpowder. — Their progress in discipline appears from the representation before given of the two attacks upon the mills of Rawdon and Henbury; and the money, which has been in many instances obtained by contribution or plunder, answers the purpose of support, and may serve as an inducement to many persons to engage in these disturbances. — The system of intimidation produced not only by the oaths and engagements before mentioned, or by threats of violence, but by the attack and destruction of houses and factories, by actual assassination in some instances, and attempts at assassination in others, under circumstances which have hitherto generally baffled all endeavours to discover and bring to justice the offenders, all tend to render these proceedings greatly alarming to the country. In many parts the quiet inhabitants consider themselves as enjoying protection only as far as the military force can extend its exertions, and look upon the rest of the country where the disturbances take place as at the mercy of the rioters. — The legal proceedings at Nottingham checked the disposition to disturbance in that quarter, but this effect did not extend to

other parts of the country; and though the proceedings under the special commissions since issued, and the convictions and executions at Lancaster and Chester appeared to make a considerable impression, they have been far from restoring peace and security to the disturbed districts.—A great military force has been assembled; the Local Militia has been in many places called out, and has done good service; the yeomanry corps have been active and highly useful. Many of the magistrates have zealously exerted their powers, some of them at great personal hazard. In many places great numbers of special constables have been appointed from amongst the more respectable inhabitants, and the Watch and Ward Act has been in some places put in force, though attempted without effect in others, or abandoned from circumstances already stated. All these efforts have proved insufficient effectually to put down the spirit of disturbance; and it is, therefore, the decided opinion of your Committee, that some further measures should be immediately adopted by Parliament, for affording more effectual protection to the lives and properties of His Majesty's subjects, and for suppressing a system of turbulence and disorder which has already proved destructive of the tranquillity and highly injurious to the property and welfare of some of the most populous and important districts of the country, and which, unless effectually checked, may lead to consequences still more extensive and dangerous.

OFFICIAL PAPERS.

AMERICAN STATES.—*Message of President Madison to the Congress, 1st June, 1812, relative to the dispute with England.*

I communicate to Congress certain documents, being a continuation of those heretofore laid before them, on the subject of our affairs with Great Britain.—Without going beyond the renewal, in 1803, of the war in which Great Britain is engaged, and omitting unrepaid wrongs of inferior magnitude, the conduct of her Government presents a series of acts hostile to the United States as an independent and neutral nation.—British cruisers have been in the continued practice of violating the American flag on the great highway of Nations, and of seizing and carrying off persons sailing under it; not in the exercise of a belligerent right, founded on the law of nations against an enemy, but of a municipal pre-

rogative over British subjects. British jurisdiction is thus extended to neutral vessels in a situation where no laws can operate but the law of nations and the laws of the country to which the vessels belong; and a self redress is assumed, which if British subjects were wrongfully detained and alone concerned, is that substitution of force for a resort to the responsible Sovereign, which falls within the definition of war. Could the seizure of British subjects, in such cases, be regarded as within the exercise of a belligerent right, the acknowledged laws of war, which forbid an article of captured property to be adjudged, without a regular investigation before a competent tribunal, would imperiously demand the fairest trial, where the sacred rights of persons were at issue. In place of such trial, these rights are subjected to the will of every petty Commander.—The practice, hence, is so far from affecting British subjects alone, that under the pretext of searching for these, thousands of American citizens, under the safeguard of public laws, and of their National flag, have been torn from their country, and from every thing dear to them; have been dragged on board ships of war of a foreign nation, and exposed, under the severities of their discipline, to be exiled to the most distant and deadly climes, to risk their lives in the battles of their oppressors, and to be the melancholy instruments of taking away those of their own brethren.—Against this crying enormity, which Great Britain would be so prompt to avenge, if committed against herself, the United States have in vain exhausted remonstrances and expostulations. And that no proof might be wanting of their conciliatory dispositions, and no pretext left for continuance of the practice, the British Government was formally assured of the readiness of the United States to enter into arrangements, such as could not be rejected, if the recovery of the British subjects were the real and the sole object. The communication passed without effect.—British cruisers have been in the practice also of violating the rights and the peace of our coasts. They hover over and harass our entering and departing commerce. To the most insulting pretensions they have added lawless proceedings in our very harbours, and have wantonly spilt American blood within the sanctuary of our territorial jurisdiction. The principles and rules enforced by that nation, when a neutral nation, against armed vessels of belligerents

hovering near her coasts, and disturbing her commerce, are well known. When called on, nevertheless, by the United States, to punish the greater offences committed by her own vessels, her Government has bestowed on their commanders additional marks of honour and confidence.—

Under pretended blockades, without the presence of an adequate force, and sometimes without the practicability of applying one, our commerce has been plundered in every sea; the great staples of our country have been cut off from their legitimate markets; and a destructive blow aimed at our agricultural and maritime interests. In aggravation of these predatory measures, they have been considered as in force from the dates of their notification; a retrospective effect being thus added, as has been done in other important cases, to the unlawfulness of the course pursued.—And to render the outrage the more signal, these mock blockades have been reiterated and enforced in the face of official communications from the British Government, declaring, as the true definition of a legal blockade, “that particular ports must be actually invested, and previous warning given to vessels bound to them not to enter.”

—Not content with these occasional expedients for laying waste our neutral trade, the Cabinet of Great Britain resorted, at length, to the sweeping system of blockades, under the name of Orders in Council, which has been moulded and managed as might best suit its political views, its commercial jealousies, or the avidity of British cruisers.—To our remonstrances against the complicated and transcendent injustice of this innovation, the first reply was that the orders were reluctantly adopted by Great Britain as a necessary retaliation on decrees of her enemy proclaiming a general blockade of the British Isles, at a time when the naval force of that enemy dared not to issue from his ports. She was reminded without effect, that her own prior blockades, unsupported by an adequate naval force actually applied and continued, were a bar to this plea; that executed edicts against millions of our property could not be retaliation on edicts confessedly impossible to be executed; that retaliation, to be just, should fall on the party setting the guilty example, not on an innocent party, which was not even chargeable with an acquiescence in it.—When deprived of this flimsy veil for a prohibition of our trade with Great Britain, her Cabinet, instead of a corresponding repeal of a prac-

tical discontinuance of its orders, formally avowed a determination to persist in them against the United States, until the markets of her enemy should be laid open to British products; thus asserting an obligation on a neutral power to require one belligerent to encourage, by its internal regulations, the trade of another belligerent, contradicting her own practice towards all nations in peace as well as in war; and betraying the insincerity of those professions which inculcated a belief, that, having resorted to her orders with regret, she was anxious to find an occasion for putting an end to them.—Abandoning still more all respect for the neutral rights of the United States, and for its own consistency, the British Government now demands as prerequisites to a repeal of its Orders, as they relate to the United States, that a formality should be observed in the repeal of the French decrees no wise necessary to their termination, nor exemplified by British usage; and that the French repeal, besides including that portion of the decrees which operates within a territorial jurisdiction as well as that which operates on the high seas against the commerce of the United States, should not be a single special repeal in relation to the United States, but should be extended to whatever other neutral nations unconnected with them may be affected by those decrees.—And as an additional insult, they are called on for a formal disavowal of conditions and pretensions advanced by the French Government, for which the United States are so far from having been themselves responsible, that, in official explanations, which have been published to the world, and in a correspondence of the American Minister at London with the British Minister for Foreign Affairs, such a responsibility was explicitly and emphatically disclaimed.

—It has become indeed sufficiently certain that the commerce of the United States is to be sacrificed, not as interfering with belligerent rights of Great Britain, not as supplying the wants of their enemies, which she herself supplies, but as interfering with the monopoly which she covets for her own commerce and navigation. She carries on a war against the lawful commerce of a friend, that she may the better carry on a commerce with an enemy, a commerce polluted by the forgeries and perjuries which are for the most part the only passports by which it can succeed.—Anxious to make every experiment short of the last resort of injured nations, the United States

have withheld from Great Britain, under successive modifications, the benefits of a free intercourse with their market, the loss of which could not but outweigh the profits accruing from her restrictions of our commerce with other nations. And to entitle those experiments to the more favourable consideration, they were so framed as to enable her to place her adversary under the exclusive operation of them. To these appeals her government has been equally inflexible, as if willing to make sacrifices of every sort, rather than yield to the claims of justice, or renounce the errors of a false pride. Nay, so far were the attempts carried to overcome the attachment of the British Cabinet to its unjust edicts, that it received every encouragement, within the competency of the executive branch of our government, to expect that a repeal of them would be followed by a war between the United States and France, unless the French edicts should also be repealed. Even this communication, although silencing for ever the plea of a disposition in the United States to acquiesce in those edicts, originally the sole plea for them, received no attention.

—If no other proof existed of a predetermination of the British Government against a repeal of its Orders, it might be found in the correspondence of the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at London and the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs in 1810, on the question whether the blockade of May 1806 was considered as in force or as not in force. It had been ascertained that the French Government, which urged this blockade as the ground of its decree, was willing, in the event of its removal, to repeal that decree; which being followed by alternate repeals of the other offensive edicts, might abolish the whole system on both sides. This inviting opportunity for accomplishing an object so important to the United States, and professed so often to be the desire of both the belligerents, was made known to the British Government. As that Government admits that an actual application of an adequate force is necessary to the existence of a legal blockade; and it was notorious, that if such a force had ever been applied, its long discontinuance had annulled the blockade in question, there could be no sufficient objection on the part of Great Britain to a formal revocation of it; and no imaginable objection to a declaration of the fact that the blockade did not exist. The declaration would have been consistent with her avowed principles of blockade, and would have

enabled the United States to demand from France the pledged repeal of her decrees; either with success, in which case the way would have been opened for a general repeal of the belligerent edicts; or without success, in which case the United States would have been justified in turning their measures exclusively against France. The British Government would, however, neither rescind the blockade, nor declare its non-existence, nor permit its non-existence to be inferred and affirmed by the American Plenipotentiary. On the contrary, by representing the blockade to be comprehended in the Orders in Council, the United States were compelled so to regard it in their subsequent proceedings.—

There was a period when a favourable change in the policy of the British Cabinet was justly considered as established. The Minister Plenipotentiary of his Britannic Majesty here proposed an adjustment of the differences more immediately endangering the harmony of the two countries. The proposition was accepted with a promptitude and cordiality corresponding with the invariable professions of this Government. A foundation appeared to be laid for a sincere and lasting reconciliation. The prospect, however, quickly vanished. The whole proceeding was disavowed by the British Government, without any explanation which could at that time repress the belief, that the disavowal proceeded from a spirit of hostility to the commercial rights and prosperity of the United States. And it has since come into proof, that at the very moment when the public Minister was holding the language of friendship, and inspired confidence in the sincerity of the negotiation with which he was charged, a secret agent of his government was employed in intrigues, having for their object a subversion of our Government, and a dismemberment of our happy union.—In reviewing the conduct of Great Britain towards the United States, our attention is necessarily drawn to the warfare just renewed by the savages on one of our extensive frontiers; a warfare which is known to spare neither age nor sex, and to be distinguished by features peculiarly shocking to humanity. It is difficult to account for the activity and combinations which have for some time been developing themselves among the tribes in constant intercourse with the British traders and garrisons, without connecting their hostility with that influence; and without recollecting the authenticated examples of such in-

(To be continued.)

ENGLISH LIBERTY OF THE PRESS,

As illustrated in the Prosecution and Punishment of

WILLIAM COBBETT.

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IN order that my countrymen and that the world may not be deceived, duped, and cheated upon this subject, I, WILLIAM COBBETT, of Botley, in Hampshire, put upon record the following facts; to wit: That, on the 24th June, 1809, the following article was published in a London news-paper, called the *COURIER*:—"The Mutiny amongst the *LOCAL MILITIA*, which broke out at Ely, was *fortunately* suppressed on Wednesday by the *arrival* of four squadrons of the *GERMAN LEGION CAVALRY* from Bury, under the *command* of General Auckland. Five of the *ringleaders* were tried by a Court-Martial, and *sentenced* to receive 500 lashes each, part of which *punishment* they received on Wednesday, and *a part* was remitted. *A stoppage* for their *knap-sacks* was the ground of the complaint that *excited* this mutinous spirit, which occasioned *the men* to surround their officers, and demand *what* they deemed their arrears. The first *division* of the German Legion halted yesterday *at Newmarket* on their return to Bury."—That, on the 1st July, 1809, I published, in the *Political Register*, an article censuring, in the strongest terms, these proceedings; that, for so doing, the Attorney General prosecuted, as seditious libellers, and by Ex-Officio Information, me, and also my printer, my publisher, and one of the principal retailers of the *Political Register*; that I was brought to trial on the 15th June, 1810, and was, by a Special Jury, that is to say, by 12 men out of 48 appointed by the Master of the Crown Office, found guilty; that, on the 20th of the same month, I was compelled to give bail for my appearance to receive judgment; and that, as I came up from Botley (to which place I had returned to my family and my farm on the evening of the 15th), a Tipstaff went down from London in order to seize me, personally; that, on the 9th of July, 1810, I, together with my printer, publisher, and the news-man, were brought into the Court of King's Bench to receive judgment; that the three former were sentenced to be imprisoned for some months in the King's Bench prison; that I was sentenced to be imprisoned for two years in Newgate, the great receptacle for malefactors, and the front of which is the scene of numerous hangings in the course of every year; that the part of the prison in which I was sentenced to be confined is sometimes inhabited by felons, that felons were actually in it at the time I entered it; that one man was taken out of it to be transported in about 48 hours after I was put into the same yard with him; and that it is the place of confinement for men guilty of unnatural crimes, of whom there are four in it at this time; that, besides this imprisonment, I was sentenced to pay a thousand pounds *TO THE KING*, and to give security for my good behaviour for seven years, myself in the sum of 3,000 pounds, and

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two sureties in the sum of 1,000 pounds each; that the whole of this sentence has been executed upon me, that I have been imprisoned the two years, have paid the thousand pounds *TO THE KING*, and have given the bail, Timothy Brown and Peter Walker, Esqrs. being my sureties; that the Attorney General was Sir Vicary Gibbs, the Judge who sat at the trial Lord Ellenborough, the four Judges who sat at passing sentence Ellenborough, Grose, Le Blanc, and Bailey; and that the jurors were, Thomas Rhodes of Hampstead Road, John Davis of Southampton Place, James Ellis of Tottenham Court Road, John Richards of Bayswater, Thomas Marsham of Baker Street, Robert Heathcote of High Street Marylebone, John Maud of York Place Marylebone, George Baxter of Church Terrace Pancras, Thomas Taylor of Red Lion Square, David Deane of St. John Street, William Palmer of Upper Street Islington, Henry Favre of Pall Mall; that the Prime Ministers during the time were Spencer Perceval, until he was shot by John Bellingham, and after that Robert B. Jenkinson, Earl of Liverpool; that the prosecution and sentence took place in the reign of King George the Third, and that, he having become insane during my imprisonment, the 1,000 pounds was paid to his son, the Prince Regent, in his behalf; that, during my imprisonment, I wrote and published 364 Essays and Letters upon political subjects; that, during the same time, I was visited by persons from 197 cities and towns, many of them as a sort of deputies from Societies or Clubs; that, at the expiration of my imprisonment, on the 9th of July, 1812, a great dinner was given in London for the purpose of receiving me, at which dinner upwards of 600 persons were present, and at which Sir Francis Burdett presided; that dinners and other parties were held on the same occasion in many other places in England; that, on my way home, I was received at Alton, the first town in Hampshire, with the ringing of the Church bells; that a respectable company met me and gave me a dinner at Winchester; that I was drawn from more than the distance of a mile into Botley by the people; that, upon my arrival in the village, I found all the people assembled to receive me; that I concluded the day by explaining to them the cause of my imprisonment, and by giving them clear notions respecting the flogging of the Local Militia-men at Ely, and respecting the employment of German Troops; and, finally, which is more than a compensation for my losses and all my sufferings, I am in perfect health and strength, and, though I must, for the sake of six children, feel the diminution that has been made in my property (thinking it right in me to decline the offer of a subscription), I have the consolation to see growing up three sons, upon whose hearts, I trust, all these facts will be engraven.

WM. COBBETT.

Botley, July 23, 1812.

Published by R. BAGSHAW, Brydges-Street, Covent-Garden.

LONDON: Printed by J. M'Creery, Black Horse-Court, Fleet-street.